

Section 2

CAHSEE Questions and Answers for Teachers

1. Who is eligible to take the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)?

During the 2002-2003 school year, students in grade 11 (class of 2004) who have not yet passed one or both portions of the CAHSEE may continue to test on designated test dates selected by the school district. In spring 2003, all students in grade 10 (class of 2005) must take the CAHSEE for the first time.

2. How can teachers best prepare students for the CAHSEE?

It is important that teachers provide instruction in state content standards for English language arts and mathematics. Instructional quality and consistency will have a significant impact on the success of students who take the CAHSEE. In addition to providing instruction that meaningfully corresponds to the state content standards, teachers' dedication to helping students learn to the full extent of their abilities will ensure that students are successful on this assessment.

3. What happens if a student does not pass the CAHSEE?

Students who do not pass the CAHSEE in the spring of their 10th grade year may retake the exam up to seven times. Students retake only the part(s) of the exam not previously passed. The school district must provide additional instruction to assist students who do not pass the exam [Education Code section 60851(e)].

4. Are students with special needs required to take the CAHSEE?

Students with special needs must pass the CAHSEE to receive a high school diploma and must be allowed to take the CAHSEE with accommodations or modifications as specified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan for classroom or statewide testing. Students who take the test using a modification will receive an invalidated test score. However, if the invalidated test score is the equivalent to a passing score (i.e., 350 or higher), the district may submit a waiver request on behalf of the student to waive the requirement of successful passage of one or both parts of the CAHSEE to receive a diploma.

5. What if parents do not want their children to take the CAHSEE?

Commencing with the class of 2004, all students are required to pass the CAHSEE to receive a high school diploma from a California public school (Education Code Section 60851). Parents cannot exempt their children from this requirement if they want their children to obtain a high school diploma from a public school.

6. How much time will students have to work on the CAHSEE?

The CAHSEE is an untimed test, so students may continue working to a reasonable limit. While the examination is not timed, the administration of the ELA part of the exam is divided into two sessions, each approximately two hours long. The mathematics part of the exam is divided into two sessions, each approximately an hour and a half long.

It is important to note that untimed does not mean unlimited time. Reasonable limits on student testing time may be necessary to accommodate issues of schedules and availability of rooms. Every effort should be made to provide for students who are unable to finish within the suggested working times. If necessary, these students may require relocation to another room to continue their work.

Although all students may have extra time to complete the CAHSEE, students may have time beyond the regular school day to complete the exam only if their Individual Educational Program or Section 504 Plan specifies the need for such extra time.

7. What if a student is absent on testing days?

Districts must ensure that all 10th graders absent during the initial administration take the CAHSEE either on the next test date designated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction or on the next designated test date selected by the district. Students missing a testing date must wait until the next testing date to take the portion of the test affected by the absence.

8. What does the English language arts part of the CAHSEE cover?

The English language arts part of the CAHSEE addresses state content standards through grade 10. It consists of multiple-choice questions and two writing tasks. The reading part of the exam covers decoding, vocabulary, informational reading, and literary reading. This part includes 50 percent literary texts and 50 percent informational texts. The texts are grade appropriate and accessible to students in grade 10 who perform at a basic level. The writing part of the exam covers writing strategies, writing conventions, and writing applications.

9. What does the mathematics part of the CAHSEE cover?

The mathematics part of the CAHSEE addresses the state content standards through algebra 1 and includes number sense; algebra and functions; measurement and geometry; statistics, data analysis, and probability; algebra 1; and mathematical reasoning. Students must also demonstrate a strong foundation in computational skills and arithmetic, including the ability to work with decimals, fractions, and percents. The mathematics part of the exam consists of multiple-choice questions.

10. Will students be allowed to use calculators for the mathematics part of the CASHEE?

A calculator may be used only by those special needs students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan that specifies the use of a calculator.

11. Will formulas and conversion factors be provided on the mathematics part of the CAHSEE?

Formulas or conversions required to complete a test question will be provided. However, there will be no formulas provided for the perimeter of a polygon, the circumference of a circle, the area of a triangle or parallelogram (including a rectangle), or the volume of a rectangular solid. The formula for finding the area of a nontraditional figure like a rhombus will be provided.

12. Who determined the content of the CAHSEE?

A High School Exit Examination Standards Panel, appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, reviewed state content standards in English language arts and mathematics and identified the content standards students should master to receive a high school diploma. The identified content standards went through public review, and the State Board of Education adopted the CAHSEE test blueprints in December 2000.

13. How can teachers be involved in the development and implementation of the CAHSEE?

Teacher involvement is vital to the CAHSEE in many ways. Content review groups meet once or twice each year, usually for three days, to review test questions prior to field testing. Members of this committee must be approved by the California Department of Education. Teachers can apply for the content review committee by contacting CAHSEE support at 800-241-5687 or at cahsee-support@ets.org. Teachers are also needed as scorers of the constructed-response questions on the English language part of the CAHSEE. High school English teachers are especially encouraged to apply. Information and an application may be found at <http://www.ets.org/reader/own/cahseeown.html>.

14. Are CAHSEE test questions released to the public?

Appropriate test security policies preclude the disclosure of *any* test item from test forms currently in operational or field-test use. Actual test items will be seen only by students at the time of examination. However, approximately 120 test questions are released each year from previous test forms. There are 60 mathematics multiple-choice questions, 60 ELA multiple-choice questions, and 2 ELA writing tasks released annually. The released questions may be found on the CAHSEE website, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee>.

15. How are the individual student results reported?

The *Student and Parent Score Report* provides two types of information about a student's performance on both parts of the exam. On the front of the report, the left-hand side shows the student's scale score, the scale score required to pass, and the fact that the student passed or did not pass, for both the English language arts and the mathematics parts of the exam. The right-hand side of the front of the report shows the number of questions answered correctly for each major strand of the content standards in English language arts and mathematics tested with multiple-choice questions. Each written essay is reported with a score of 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest score students can earn. The back of the report provides interpretive information for students and their parents/guardians.

16. How should the individual student results be used?

It is important to recognize that a student's individual score on the CAHSEE fulfills the purpose for which the test was designed, which is to determine if a student has demonstrated grade-level competency in the California content standards to be eligible to receive a high school diploma. The CAHSEE is not designed as a diagnostic test that would indicate an individual student's specific strengths and weaknesses. The student's scores on each strand of the CAHSEE may, however, provide an indication of areas in which additional diagnostic information should be obtained and where remedial or supplemental instruction should be focused. Teachers should examine test results for their school and district to help them determine which strands and standards need additional emphasis in the classroom.

17. What is a scale score?

A scale score for the CAHSEE ranges from approximately 250 to 450. This type of score is used for reporting the CAHSEE results to provide a more precise measurement of a student's achievement and to assure that test forms given at different times are comparable in difficulty. The CAHSEE provides scale scores for individual students and a mean or average scale score for groups of students. An individual scale score of 350 is necessary to pass each part of the CAHSEE.

18. Who sees the CAHSEE results for individual students?

Only authorized school personnel, students, and parents/guardians see individual results. The school district must record on each student's permanent record whether or not the student passed each part of the exam.

19. What information is provided on the CAHSEE aggregate reports that are distributed to districts and also reported on the California Department of Education website?

Aggregate reports include CAHSEE results for schools, districts, counties, and the state and are posted annually in September. Results are reported for the following categories:

- all students tested
- gender
- ethnicity
- language fluency
- economic status
- special education program participation

Scores for English language arts and mathematics show:

- number of students tested
- number and percent of students who passed
- number and percent of students who did not pass
- mean (average) scale score

Additional scores for mathematics include the average percent correct for the following strands:

- number sense
- algebra and functions
- measurement and geometry
- statistics, data analysis, and probability
- algebra 1

Additional scores for English language arts include the average percent correct for:

Reading

- word analysis
- reading comprehension
- literary response and analysis

Writing

- writing strategies
- writing conventions

Writing Tasks

Aggregate reports provide an average score for each essay. The writing applications score counts for 30 percent of the English language arts score.